

CLAIMS

What Is Claimed Is:

1. An improved system for electronic data sales and distribution over wide area computer networks, said networks comprising a network conduit, at least one e-commerce server computer in communication with said network conduit, and at least one customer terminal computer in communication with said network conduit, each said computer comprising input means, display means, processing means, storage means and means for communicating with said network conduit, the system comprising:

e-commerce site means for presenting e-commerce functions to each said customer in communication with said e-commerce server computer via said network conduit;

licensing module means for giving each said customer terminal computer permission to download a program module to said customer terminal computer, said licensing module means comprising an executable software application being executed on each said customer terminal computer engaged in the improved system; and

program download site means for providing a program module for downloading to each said customer terminal computer responsive to a user request.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein said e-commerce site means comprises an executable software application being executed by said processing means of said e-commerce server computer and said program download site means comprises an executable software application being executed by a processing means in a program module server computer, said e-commerce server computer and said program module server computer being distinct from one another.

3. The system of Claim 2, wherein said e-commerce site means further provides each said customer terminal computer with the ability to download said licensing module means.

4. The system of Claim 3, further comprising a supplier terminal computer in local area network communication with said program module server computer.

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5. The system of Claim 3, wherein said functionality of said program module is responsive to output from said licensing module, said program module and said licensing module each comprising executable software applications, wherein output from said licensing module is input to said program module when said program module and said licensing module are executed on the processing means of a single computer.

6. An improved method for selling and distributing electronic data over wide-area computer networks, each said computer in said network comprising input means, output means, processing means, and network communication means, the method comprising the steps of:

creating a licensing module, said licensing module comprising an executable software application;

creating a program module, said program module comprising an executable software application, responsive to output from said licensing module; and

distributing said licensing module separate from said program module.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein said distributing step comprises licensing module distributing and program module distributing, said licensing module distributing being executed by e-commerce site means and said program module distributing being executed by program download site means.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein said licensing module distributing comprises said e-commerce site means transferring said licensing module from an e-commerce server computer to a customer terminal computer via a wide-area network.

9. The method of Claim 8, wherein said program module distributing comprises said program download site means transferring said program module from a program download computer to a customer terminal via a wide-area network.

10. An improved system for software distribution over wide area computer networks, said networks comprising a network conduit, at least one e-commerce server computer in communication with said network conduit, at least one customer terminal computer in communication with said network conduit, and at least one supplier server computer in communication with said network conduit, each said computer comprising at least one programmable computer comprising input means, display means, processing means, storage means and means for communicating with said network conduit, the system comprising:

e-commerce site means for distributing licensing modules to each said customer terminal computer via said network conduit; and

program download site means for distributing program modules to each said customer terminal computer via said network conduit.

11. The system of Claim 10, wherein said e-commerce site means comprises an executable software application being executed on said e-commerce server computer.

12. The system of Claim 11, wherein said program download site means comprises an executable software application being executed on said supplier server computer.

13. The system of Claim 12, wherein said licensing modules and said program modules each comprise executable software applications for execution on programmable

14. The system of Claim 13, wherein each said distribution of one said program module is responsive to the prior execution of one said licensing module on one said customer terminal computer.

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~~17.~~ The system of Claim 16, wherein execution of said program module in said unlicensed condition is permitted for a pre-defined period of time, whereby expiration of said pre-defined period of time will prevent said program module from further execution.

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